Speech given by

Reverend Ed King

at Millsaps College

relating events of Freedom Summer

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KING: Many people have written books. The library will have a lot of that material available but by advocacy role, I mean somebody who was trying to say, " We need to carry this cause on. We need to raise money for this purpose", or somebody trying to write journalism for the moment or somebody saying, "I [inaudible] Mississippi and the United States to you on the basis of three weekends in Mississippi. Many of us in the Movement found that as offensive as did white Mississippians. Today, though, it's good to have those kinds of records, too. Let me just read some to you from manuscripts I wrote about 10 or 11 years ago on this…this was written after the '64 summer. Mexico is far from Mississippi; at least, it is as far from Mississippi as the Movement's survivors in the '64 Freedom Summer [inaudible]. Mexico became a popular place…let me stand up so I can see all of you…Mexico became a popular place for short, inexpensive rest and rehabilitation week away from Mississippi. In terms of actual driving miles it's so long a distance down into Mexico, it's not much further than New York City. With that discovery, many Mississippi civil rights veterans left the country that Fall. In a sense, they had left the country spiritually a few months earlier. After the summer, people were exhausted. Few found anything very [inaudible] happening in America in the Fall of It was the [inaudible] of the election between Goldwater and Johnson. Almost no one [inaudible] wanted to be involved with any such thing. Goldwater was Goldwater and at Atlantic City, the Movement had discovered the power and deceit of Lyndon Johnson, the weakness of Hubert Humphrey, the decadence of American liberalism. As an aside, this theme holds up in the literature. The collapse of American liberalism, as traditionally known from the New Deal on, was first demonstrated in the Atlantic City convention. We are still struggling with what will replace it. We don't know yet. We have not worked out whatever political mechanisms and instruments will carry us the next 15 to 20 years. Maybe we will continue to just drift. [inaudible] everyone else in the Mississippi Movement, especially the college students returning to such places as Berkley, had passed a critical mark on the road to radicalism as the only way to understand America and America's role in the world and really, as the only way to save America and the world. They had also passed a step that would determine still to build the world on the basis of movement values of freedom, democracy and love. Jeanette and I shared these general movement feelings of exhaustion, disillusionment, confusion, rising radicalism and above all, the desire to find a temporary escape. Mexico beckoned and we answered spending the Christmas holidays in '64 there. For several days, we were almost successful in blocking Mississippi from our minds. We stayed in a small hotel where we were the only American guests. On Christmas morning, the desk clerk greeted us with a special present, a copy of the local English language newspaper, and on the cover was a headline, 'Christmas Comes

Even to Mississippi'. We could not escape even leaving the country. This particular article described the campaign by sympathetic northern liberals to send turkeys to poor, black families in the state. We had to laugh. One of the goals of the Movement was to make the rest of America conscious of Mississippi. We had never thought in terms of turkeys at Christmas. A few minutes earlier that Christmas morning, our mood was serious, quite serious. We had already begun to think of Mississippi when we exchanged Christmas gifts, and we both realized that we were alive, still alive. That we had actually survived the preceding year in Mississippi. For we had assumed, in some ways, we would not celebrate Christmas in 1964. That we and many of our closest friends in SNCC and in COFO would be killed during the Freedom Summer. Some did die. Most survived, but with new insights and strength and with many wounds and scars. The purpose of the Freedom Summer campaign had been to make possible a new period in the state of Mississippi. So many of us had been unable to make any plans for a future that might not exist for us so we could focus on the summer. There were, of course, long range plans made by COFO and these activities were being followed. Extensions of the freedom school into the Headstart. We didn't call it Headstart, but we were going to have preschool kinds of programs for four and five-year olds. We had a number of political activities that were continuing. Such were our sober thoughts that Christmas morning. The fact that events in Mississippi was news in Mexico City helped us realize just how successful in breaking open the isolation that helped foster the closed society had been. A year earlier, we were isolated wondering how the Movement could get the attention of America, of the world, focused on the terrible conditions of Blacks and civil rights workers, the developing fascism of the closed society. Now the world did notice. That was a major victory. Not only was Mississippi noticed, but the outside world was now committed to maintaining a presence inside Mississippi, a kind of new reconstruction. A presence that stretched from civil rights workers to FBI agents to occasional federal troops to the church. Black and white ministers who had come into the church, who had come into the state organized by World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches, stayed on to help establish the Delta ministry. In an interview in 1963, I had once said that a goal of the struggle in Mississippi was to make the state more like the rest of America. For Mississippi, that would have been a kind of progress. The victories of the 1964 Freedom Summer gained at least this much. The story of Mississippi and the rest of the 60's, and, now, I would say the 70's, is the working out of this, the Americanization of Mississippi. By the time we in the Movement had made this possible, we realized that, in the face of fascist Mississippi, we had seen America at its worst and the clearest possible vision of our whole nation. The story of America in the rest of the 60's and 70's is the steady revelation of a hidden sickness in a new closed society that threatens all humankind and whose opening and salvation would probably someday be possible only by the same combination that opened Mississippi. Foreign missionaries, invasion,

hopefully nonviolent as in Mississippi, outside agitators, loving sacrifice unto death and even greater courage and wisdom for the local citizens of America. Mississippi had been unable to change, unable to save itself, to produce enough resources, ideas, people or institutions from either the Blacks or the white communities to face its problems. Mississippi had to depend on the outside world while heeding the judgment and resenting the dependence. The struggle to save Mississippi from its worst self had been difficult. The struggle to save America from itself would be more difficult. But the basic attitudes of most people in both [battles] would be the same, a mixture of love and hate, of attraction and disgust, of hope and fear, of pride and shame, of patriotism and loyal treachery. The Movement in Mississippi in 1964 certainly had not won all it fought for, but that any victory was achieved in Mississippi of 1964 is remarkable, and, if any change could come to Mississippi in 1964, then change is not impossible for America. The Fall of ’64 in Mississippi saw the start of a new period, the right of people to organize. People in the Movement tried many things and most of them failed. What they were struggling for was the right to work on change if it took two years, 20 years, or 40 years. And at the end of the summer, white Mississippi knew that change was going to happen. Black Mississippi knew that change was going to happen. The myths of [never] had been broken, and you have to break the mythology that organizes a society and the mythology that organizes individuals before you can have change. So that was broken. Consciousness-raising and the educational programs in the black community, confrontation and proof to the white community that there would be change. The new struggle was over who would determine the content of that change, who would direct it, control it, or even limit it. The Movement was now strong enough by the end of the summer to guarantee that Mississippi would not slip back into the old-fashioned closed society. The greatest victory was the right to organize without fearing total repression. Black people could now do some work for themselves, still at great risk, but without all of the old fears of death. There was a little federal help. Still not enough. People were organizing in the political, religious, educational [groups] all across the state, and they were able to get away with it. Prior to the Summer of ’64, people who had any kind of a meeting in a black community for self help, outside of a few large cities, would find that meeting disrupted and their church destroyed, literally destroyed. People stood up to the worst violence that we thought Mississippi could produce. Not as many people died as we expected, but people had been dying every couple of weeks. People were lynched and murdered in Mississippi in the year preceding the ’64 Summer. Once the church burning started…that was late in the Spring of ’64…we had at least one black church bombed or burned every week for 60 straight weeks, and, then, it began to ease up so that it was only every other week or just two or three churches a month. We were known as the church burning capital of the world. Blacks never struck back. The black leader, designated by the white leaders of America, Charles Evers,…I’m very serious, I think he was

chosen by white America to lead the Blacks…at one point, advocated that Blacks should go out and burn white churches in retaliation. He didn't really mean it. It was a way of swinging an audience with demagogic speech. SNCC, who might have been able to organize that sort of thing in guerilla fashion, did not do it. The fact that we did not have guerilla warfare here on both sides and that we do not have it today is another victory, another testimony, to the power of nonviolence. We could have become like [inaudible]. Most Mississippians, black and white, have got some Scotch-Irish blood. At least, our cousins over there do each other in. We could very easily have become that kind of a society. All our institutions on the outside still functioning, our banks, our colleges, our businesses but with an even firmer segregation, with federal troops not promoting freedom, but just promoting law and order. That did not happen and that too is a victory. Let me tell you a little about where we were before we got into the Summer, and then I want to go over what's going to go on at the conference for you. The first topic of the conference is going to be "Freedom Summer after 15 years." So that would be a kind of general session. Joyce Ladner, who is now a professor of sociology at Hunter College in New York, was a sociology major at Tougaloo College. She is a graduate of…she's from Hattiesburg. She will be the main speaker. She is working on a book on Where is Mississippi Now After the Movement? This kind of thing. Jeanette, my wife, will be on a panel there. Jeanette's a Jackson Millsaps graduate, Jacksonian. We have Frank Smith, a former Congressman from Mississippi; Jimmy Travis, who is a black SNCC worker, and, then, Milton [Dorst], who's an outside journalist. That kind of panel is typical. Local people, black and white, mixed with outsiders of some connection to what went on in the Freedom Summer. That night we'll talk about the genesis of the Mississippi Summer project, the particular [battle] shape it took. The reason we had to bring in a thousand outsiders is because Mississippi could not change itself. The institutions in the state were too weak. The white moderate world had been controlled and silenced. Dr. Silver writes of this in his book, and most of your have probably read his book, Closed Society. The time at which the white moderates and liberals could have maintained control of their society was 1954. By 1964, they had lost it, and, in a sense, did not matter. We are going to have a number of white moderates from Mississippi on this panel. In some ways, they are there to talk about what happened afterwards, but the essence of what this Freedom Summer was saying was, "There is nothing in white Mississippi, nothing, that matters." And the black community will do this totally separate from white Mississippi. There is no one in the white church that we can communicate with. There is no one in the white business world. Any of these places. Now, some of those businessmen who are coming who were moderates won't remember it that way. But the Movement said, "We will do it. We will attack you. It will still be nonviolent." The traditional mechanisms for moderate social change had failed. On the white side, the extremists had controlled and silenced the moderates. On the black side, the white

extremists had moved in and had begun killing the black leaders. Now lynching had always been a [pattern], but this was…this was more like the very earliest lynchings when key black political leaders in the late 1860's and early 70's down to '76 and '77, along in there, when key leaders were killed. In Mississippi, key local black leaders were being murdered very carefully. Probably, some white Mississippians did that. I happen to think that the U. S. government may have been involved in some of that. I'm very paranoid of saying that giving you some [outside]. I've, also, felt that white Mississippi was always criticized too much for some things that were going on. The U. S. government was operating not as an ally of the Civil Rights Movement, but to control the Civil Rights Movement. We began to say in the Movement, "What can we do?" For several years, people tried. Voter registration was tried and failed. Only a handful of people were registered to vote. Sit-ins were tried to desegregate public accommodations and failed. The state would not budge. The price of reprisal was more severe in Mississippi than any other state. Communication was tried, particularly in [inaudible] points at churches. The churches, in essence, remained segregated. People could not even talk together about problems. The government was not involved in Mississippi at first, the federal government. The federal government became involved in Mississippi at the time of the freedom rides in 1961 when people from the North, [inaudible] including southerners, came into the state on buses and other transportation to show that the law was not being enforced. The freedom rides had two targets: white Mississippi and the federal government which was not enforcing the laws of the United States. In 1960, the student Movement began with black students in sit-ins at Woolworth's lunch counter and this kind of thing around the nation. Mississippi had a tiny bubble in '60 and'61 of student protests, but very little. Less than any other southern state. So outsiders came in with the freedom rides. The nonviolent direct action Movement had begun in the mid-50's with Martin Luther King in Alabama and then, it sort of quieted down. It exploded with the student Movement using the tactics of Mahatma Gandhi as developed by Martin King in Alabama. Ella Baker will be one of the speakers here at Millsaps on Wednesday night. Ella Baker help organize the SCLC office for Dr. King. She had originally been a labor union organizer and a civil right organizer for the NAACP. Then she went to work for SCLC, helped set them up and then, SCLC gave Ella Baker, already a senior citizen, to be the first adult advisor for SNCC on their strategy and on their politics. A lot of the people who are coming are not well-known, but they are remarkable people who will be at our panels. Ella Baker, the SNCC leaders, King, all of these people are trying to decide what to do about places like Mississippi, Southwest Georgia, most of rural Alabama outside of Birmingham and Montgomery where you have Movements. The decision was that SNCC would move in not in the dramatic fashion of freedom rides where you were sure to be arrested instantly. You could go to Parchman and suffer and you dramatize things and you let the people, the black people, know that help is on the way. That

was good. But you had to do something else. SNCC moved in in guerilla fashion and lived with the people. Nonviolent guerillas but not noticed living in the communities, changing their home maybe once a week so that people wouldn't find out where they were, secretly printing newspapers, newsletters, everything like this, and, when they were discovered, going to prison, being beaten, and, every couple of months, somebody being murdered. The strange thing that Americans don't know, unless they are readers of the Jackson Daily News and the Mississippi Press, which I think has probably printed as much truth as the New York Times…although the Mississippi Press didn't know it…the Mississippi Press kept talking about who were these outsiders financing the Movement and kept trying to find some very strange source and saying there has to be somebody behind this. Well, they pointed the finger at the Kennedys and at the Communists. That's not a very healthy coalition. The reality was it was the Kennedys and the Movement against Mississippi was heavily financed and to this day we do not know who financed us. My feeling, and I'm not alone, is that we were probably financed in our assault on Mississippi by the federal government and likely the CIA. We know officially the money came from the ruling class of America, the top liberals and the top foundations. There was no question. When the invasion of Mississippi started in '61, the purpose was to get the students out of the lunchrooms where there was too much trouble, to make them stop going on freedom rides where they were constantly arrested and U. S. citizens started telling Congress, "Do something". The Kennedys said, "We are the brightest and best". I'll praise them a little bit later, but basically they said, "You have never had so many brave people from the brightest colleges in the country, in the nation, running this country. We will do what is right for civil rights and we are the experts and if you don't trust your experts, why do you elect us?" Assuming that we elected them, which I don't happen to think. I don't think Mr. Kennedy won the 1960 election. He was inaugurated President, but that was some ballot juggling that got us to that point. We as liberals were willing to overlook the honesty at that point, because we said the government is on our side. The government said, "We will go." And by government I mean Bobby and John supposedly talking to others. "We will get you the money to finance voter registration work if you will stop civil rights demonstrations, if you will stop direct action, and if you will do voter registration work, we will then protect you. We can use federal law to protect you." At which point some of the major foundations in the country, and some we didn't know about, began to come through with money. Probably a lot of that money was foundation money, but we now know that some of those same foundations were later used to channel CIA money into places where the CIA wanted to control, for instance, American student groups like the National Student Association. I think the same thing was going on in Mississippi to control a people's movement for the benefit of those people. I think the folks in Washington really thought that what they were doing was the best for black Americans and white Americans. That

was part of the game. We never understood it. We were always glad to get any money we could get through the foundation [inaudible]. We never really thought that early it was federal, but it was very clear that the government wanted to control what people did, and it became very clear that the foundations, white liberal foundation leaders, would tell SNCC, "You can do this. You cannot do that." Then the tension would come when the NAACP could figure out what the federal government wanted before the order was given, and, consistently in the 50's and 60's, worked as the arm of the federal government against the Civil Rights Movement. It didn't always work because people got out of control. For instance, the Kennedys did what they could to stop the desegregation of Ole Miss. Poor Ross Barnett has been fingered as playing the game with the Kennedys and not succeeding. Or maybe he succeeded from his angle. The Kennedys were playing the game on the opposite side. Medgar Evers has told me that he was ordered to keep James Meredith out of Ole Miss until 1965 after John Kennedy's reelection. I certainly got stuff like this from high people in the justice department. Nothing is to happen in Mississippi until after the Democratic Party wins in 1965. It seems silly when you look back on it but until that election came nobody was that sure and especially if you buy the thesis that the Democrats stole the election in 1960 in Illinois and Texas. We were facing a very close political scene, and they were saying, "In the second term, we'll do everything you want." Medgar told me that the national NAACP said he would be fired if he didn't stop Meredith. And Medgar stood up to the Kennedys and to Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and said he would not stop Meredith. Now, there were poor, white Mississippians out there with their sheets and crosses running around thinking they were the ones out trying to stop Meredith, and they were cussing Bobby Kennedy. And the Movement, as we began to find these things out, we began to reach the question that Mrs. Hamer did, "I question America. What is going on here?" We tried everything the government said. We found out that the government wasn't going to protect us anyway. Hundreds of thousands of people were arrested in Mississippi in voter registration drives and the U. S. government did not intervene. The voter registration effort failed. People could not pass the literacy test. Voter registration in Mississippi by the early 60's was down to around 8,000 out of about 350, 400,000 black voters. After a lot of money, a lot of effort, we increased that to 12,000. Finally, after the death of Medgar Evers, after a lot of violence in the state, the voter money from foundations, or wherever it came from, was cut off. It was clear that Mississippi wasn't going to register enough Blacks to affect the 1964 election, and that money was channeled to other southern states, like Georgia, where there was a possibility that, in a close election, black voters could swing the day for the Democrats. The fact that local Blacks in Issaquena County might want to vote was not a major concern of the federal government. How they would vote was a concern then, and how they would vote is a concern today. The Movement basically [inaudible] the state of Mississippi and the federal

government and launched this major attack on the state of Mississippi. The attack came on bringing in outsiders who would bring press with them, who would come from colleges all over the United States, and they came from southern colleges as well as northern colleges, and we would open up the society. We would set up new institutions, and this is what happened. Parallel institutions. New schools were set up in the Freedom School program where people learned literacy. We had an adult literacy project so people could learn to register to vote and so people could learn to understand what was going on. We had French classes for junior high school students. We had remedial math classes. We had schools which were offering remedial math burned to the ground. Any change was not going to be tolerated by Mississippi. We set up an alternative press with underground newspapers and finally above ground black community newspapers. They didn't survive long. There's not much money for that, but we tried. The church came in with a new presence. The denominations which were silent in Mississippi were represented in…through the National Council of Churches on the side of the Civil Rights Movement. We set up new political structures. All of these things we called parallel. We would learn freedom by doing it. We would live in the future and celebrate it now by having an integrated community in the poorest neighborhoods of black Mississippi. We would show what life might be like a generation away if Blacks and Whites could live together to free the Democratic Party and the apparatus of the political end of the Movement and challenge the democratic party at Atlantic City. There are many other specifics [inaudible]. Medical committee on human rights. A lot of other things would come out of it. The students came here very liberal from the outside. There was a struggle as to who would control the Mississippi Movement, and there was a struggle as to who would control the students. These students, half of them anyway, were from the…the most famous colleges in the nation. People like the editor of the Stanford Daily. Student body presidents from all over. These people carried clout in Washington. We were glad to have them. They also were affluent enough to be able to come. The struggle then became whether SNCC, led by Bob Moses, would influence these black and white American students or would somebody tied in with the liberal establishment. Moses is not coming to this conference unfortunately. Now Lowenstein is who came on our campus last year and is a friend of mine. I'm not really in politics, though I have a lot of friends who are in a lot of strange places. Lowenstein worked very hard to help set up the program in Mississippi and, then, worked very hard to stop it saying that it was controlled by communists. [inaudible] controlled by [Maos] even. And I was one of the people receiving [Maos] literature. Only much later did I find out that the FBI subscribes to it to prove that I was a Communist. You should hear the dirty things I used to say about the Communists. I said these blankety-blank reds in New York want to make it look like they were involved in the Civil Rights Movement so they could raise money. And here they're sending me a free subscription, because they

picked up my name out of the Washington Post. Never crossed my mind that I …I was fighting the Communists just like the FBI wanted me to. Somebody was poisoning the relationships between people in the movement all over the place. And the Jackson Daily News doesn't have that kind of power, especially within the Civil Rights Movement. Somebody high in the U. S. government was doing that very deliberately to split people apart. Didn't work in Mississippi but by the end of the Summer, people were so confused, they didn't know what to do next. There was a pause and then people began to do things. Out of the Mississippi Movement came the women's Movement. The first major protest by women was black and white women within SNCC protesting about their second-class status. Even though they might die, they were still asked to be in the kitchen fixing the coffee while somebody else was sitting up in the living room writing the newsletter. The [bomb] would get everybody, and the women said, "We're going to be equal or more." The student Movement, the campus Movement, which eventually led to some pretty crazy things but in its early stages was for academic reform, free speech on campuses and political activity directly came out of Mississippi. The revolt at Berkley, the first big campus revolt in the Fall of '64, began over raising money to send to the Freedom Democratic Party and SNCC in Mississippi. And people in California who were opposed, conservative republicans and establishment democrats who were trying to stop the Freedom Party because we were a threat to the democratic party, moved against the students at Berkley and all hell broke loose and students were jailed on the Berkley campus and so on. The Berkley Movement was led by a philosophy major. Some of his articles are at the reserve desk in the library. The SNCC Movement in Mississippi was led by Bob Moses, who had been a math major as an undergraduate and a philosophy major in graduate school. He talked [Kamul] all the time. These people turned out to be radicals. The anti-war Movement, the first major anti-war demonstration in 1965 was organized by Bob Moses, black SNCC worker in Mississippi, and Staughton Lynd, white volunteer out of Yale. Yeah, he [was from Yale] [inaudible] faculty, and they organized the anti-war Movement. Many other things. More lasting than those specific movements, though, are the questioning movements, the revival of the new left. People certainly had no communication to speak of with the old mind communist parties. What people came up with was saying, "We have got to reexamine power. Who is in control in America? How do people make decisions? How does this get done?" Unfortunately, the SNCC people were worn out with suffering, exhausted and beaten down and really did not provide much significant leadership to the nation after the '64 summer. The craziness of all the world…beyond what you thought I was going to talk about, who bombed what in Mississippi…the craziness of this world really got to us at the Atlantic City convention. We were told that a compromise settlement of two seats…we had a delegation of sixty-four people, and the Democratic Party, after great political effort on our part to bring political reality and moral reality into that arena, offered two seats. I was one of the

people offered a seat at the convention. That was a compromise that we would let all the regular Mississippi delegates stay and give our [inaudible] delegation two seats. Our two seats I noticed happened to have been placed with the state of Alaska, so we were not going to be allowed to represent Mississippi. That wasn't so bad. The issue there was not that the Freedom Democratic Party was defeated in 100 percent of what it asked for, 'cause people were very willing to compromise, but what came down from the White House was that the President would pick the people from the Freedom Democratic Party, and the President had picked Aaron Henry and Ed King. And the President of the United States had said Fannie Lou Hamer and Bob Moses, and so on and so on, but particularly Fannie Lou Hamer, cannot be a delegate to this convention. Black people have always had to struggle for the right to have leadership, so your leaders aren't killed like Medgar Evers was killed or Martin King. Once you have the right to have leaders that have a movement, the battle shifts immediately into who picks the leaders. Can Blacks name their own leaders or are leaders picked by white America for Blacks? Sociologically the same thing would hold up in any freedom movement in the world. And in Atlantic City people said, "We will not take a compromise where this delegation is not allowed to pick." Some people didn't want to take two seats, but the ultimate thing was a philosophic point. Whites will not pick leadership for Blacks. Whites will not designate certain Blacks as the people to come to the big house. And so people turned down the compromise. This was proof to American liberals that the Movement could not operate within the political arena and must be Communist. Every time somebody said we were Communists, somebody else said, "I'm certainly not what they are. I don't think I'm a Communist, but it's time we start finding out what's going on in the world." [inaudible] they ran into an old line Communist, all they ever got was doctrine and quotations and that didn't make any sense either so that even on the Movement side, there is no radical philosophy yet developed to handle America. I said traditional liberalism is defunct. Nothing has replaced it within the establishment, but nothing has replaced it yet as opposition. We still live in that transition period we paused from the 70's. We would probably have a rip-roaring time [inaudible].

KING: I don't even know whether all of you have seen the program yet or not. Eventually, it'll be out, but it's split up into a lot of topics. Some of which may have been obvious to you, and some of them may not have been so obvious. I hope this kind of talk helps you make sense out of what parts of the program you try to get to. We've got time for [other] questions. Yes.

??? I hope you don't mind, you know, [inaudible] anything further about that American liberalism being dead, because, right at 1964…

KING: I guess I'd rather say [inaudible]. It's not dead. It's still powerful. It's not…it's not a viable thing for…as an answer anymore.

??? Well, what I was looking at was the four years immediately following you had I mean you had the Civil Rights Act of 1964 enacted, and you had the Great Society Program and you know, which worked you know, part in the direction of social welfare state. While I agree the 70's have taken us into another direction, I really felt like, you know, that what went on in Mississippi and with the Civil Rights Movement did provide a catalyst for those [inaudible] with the Great Society Program…

KING: I think that's…that's true. It provided a catalyst, but the ideas in the Great Society were not new. Some of them may have been acted [out] in '64. But the ideas had been around just waiting to go in, and many movement people were the first to criticize it and say that this is statism. Movement people sound very conservative as well as radical. Movement people saw the cost of the Great Society, saw the problem with trying to run a war at the same time you have a great society, but we saw the strings. The strings were out in the open. Headstart came into Mississippi to help children, yes. More importantly, it came to give money. We regard that as a victory of the Movement. They put millions of dollars of money, economic boom into Mississippi of hiring people to work in those Headstart programs. They were also used primarily to quiet the black community and control the black vote. And there's some kind of a poverty program in the Jackson newspapers this morning about rip-off money. A lot of people think millions of dollars had been ripped off the poverty program. I think it was intended as corruption and to get people sucked into it. I've worked with it for years, because it does do some good. When those programs began, people were told by Hubert Humphrey who spoke to Mississippians, Blacks, if you will guarantee that your people will stay with the NAACP instead of SNCC and with the democratic party, you will get poverty money and you can name your friends to the jobs. It was the new, you know, Mayor Daily's slush fund for the South. And it did some good. You go back in, you know, to Mayor Curley in Boston. He put his friends and neighbors and cousins into jobs as city street cleaners. But they got the streets clean, and if you lived in a, you know, a middle-class neighborhood, and some poor Whites came out there who'd gotten jobs through corruption, you didn't like the wasted money, but you were still glad to have the streets cleaned. But you have to look at it in the long run. Does that…have those programs created initiative, or have they smothered initiative? And that's a heavy one to try to figure out. Have those programs done more good for poor Americans, black or white? They have helped the people who got the salaries. Have they really helped that much? I don't know. Even if they do help, can we afford them? You may have to do it some other way even if you can't…Jean?

JEAN: I'm concerned about our students being able to get some real feeling of

what Freedom Summer was. Now, towards the end of your talk, you started talking more about those kind of things that would make it concrete, but what I'm finding in students is they really don't know what Freedom Summer was. They don't know who was here. They don't know that we had thousands of young, white college students here. They don't know what they were doing. They don't know what [FPP] is or Atlantic City or Freedom Schools, and sometimes I think you start about two steps ahead of…

KING: Or three or four. Ok. Freedom Summer was defending the black community from massive white opposition and replacing and rebuilding the institutions or building new institutions. We recruited about a thousand volunteers from outside the state to come and live in Mississippi and work on those things. If somebody worked on a college newspaper, we'd probably put them to work in someplace like Vicksburg publishing a local weekly black newspaper. If somebody had…yeah.

JEAN: You said, "We". Who is…

KING: Ok.

JEAN: And you said, "We, in the Movement". Who is "we" and what is the Movement?

KING: Ok. In Mississippi, the Movement was chiefly SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which grew out of the first wave of the black student Movement in 1960. It always had some white members in this period, including southern whites. They were the major civil rights group working in Mississippi. They had full-time volunteers. Before the Freedom Summer, we had a staff of maybe 40, 45 civil rights workers in the state. They planned the program with local people for a thousand workers who came in. Some worked on building up political parties. Some worked on research projects very much like the R&D Center here now trying to figure what do you do down the line with this or that. Most worked not in political or confrontation fields, but in community service agencies, the equivalent of welfare, trying to get people in the black community to share so that they could share clothing, food, things like this. Church groups sending in the turkeys. Well, that sounds like social work. Well, we had had to bring in outside social workers, because the welfare system didn't function. It was used as a weapon against the people. About two-thirds of the volunteers worked in community centers. One of the big projects was teaching sewing. We had been able to get sewing machines, new sewing machines, purchased outside the state. And we would try to teach people how to use the new machines. Sometimes the planning wouldn't work and you'd have a new machine, and you'd be taking it in to a community that didn't have electricity. And there were a lot of places in Mississippi that

didn't have electricity 15 years ago in the backwoods areas. So that most of the workers were not doing anything controversial or even very exciting in and of itself whether social service and education, tutoring people. At night, you would try to get the people who would come to your community center or school in the daytime to come back at night to talk about politics. We had doctors on hand to help with their medical problems. That was a couple of beatings a day. And we had ministers functioning as a core of chaplains. We had entertainers like some of the people coming here for the Friday afternoon freedom singing thing. We had entertainers who would travel around the state giving performances in local churches or out in the fields to entertain the troops who were down here. That's what it amounted to. We had the free southern theater which traveled around presenting drama. They would set up a stage on the flat bed of a truck or in a church. There was no access to public schools. Black people could not use black public schools for community meetings. A lot of things had to be done outdoors, because once the churches started burning, other churches were afraid to let people in. In a sense, people had to face up to the violence and survive. And they did. By the end of the summer, many people were questioning nonviolence, but many of the Mississippi people still believed in nonviolence. This did not mean people would not carry a gun in self-defense or have a gun in their home for self-defense, but they still would be non-violent if they went out to register to vote to reach out anything that might be a confrontation. About 200 of the volunteers stayed in the state after the end of the Summer, and we've had a continuous presence of outsiders working in Mississippi chiefly in the legal field, but in many other things, too. We've had a continuous presence. Headstart programs would be second of northerners, outsiders, who have chosen to come to Mississippi. That again was a pattern very much like reconstruction. Not being very noticed, but they have survived and stayed on or new ones come in as short-term volunteers with some…usually with church projects now.

JEAN: How many white college students from outside the state did we have?

KING: We probably had about 600 white students, about 400 black students. White students were able to get the money to come easier than black students. Black students were more likely to come from lower middle-class families and have to work in the summer.

JEAN: What I would like to see come out of the conference is something that would happen to help students today and maybe, maybe, I don't know, maybe it's wishful thinking, to be able to see some reason behind that whole type of movement, because what I'm getting from say, one-third of my students in my classes, students whose parents are friends or they don't have any personal relationship with [inaudible] of the Movement, they make comments like, you know, "You've got to be crazy to even think of anything like that", and they're so far removed from them. So I'm trying to

find ways or something that they could compare it with so it would help them see that it wasn't so crazy for some students at Oberlin to…

KING: Well, it was crazy.

JEAN: Crazy, but they [inaudible], because they believed in something. So, whatever made somebody, you know, want to…

KING: It's hard to know what they believed in. I helped recruit the students. They certainly believed in freedom, democracy, the ideals we have…

JEAN: [inaudible] they came on a lark. You know, spend the summer in Mississippi [inaudible] get away from home.

KING: No, no.

JEAN: Are you sure?

KING: Very few.

JEAN: You can't tell me that every student that came down here came as a [martyr]…

KING: No. No, they didn't. Not that. But there were other places you could go for a lark. I think that those who came may have come for something exciting and adventurous.

JEAN: Right.

KING: But they also came with a political purpose. It wasn't just that they couldn't find anything else to do. Out of a thousand, there must have been a few who didn't know and after they got here, they said, "Lord, how did I get into this?" But we also tried to weed those people out. We had psychologists and college chaplains and college counselors and college deans of students all over the country working with the students. Students were screened and had to apply to be allowed to come take a chance on dying in Mississippi. And there was a big fight inside the Movement of how undemocratic that is. We did everything except give them IQ tests. And even students who had been accepted, we had a group of volunteer psychiatrists working at the training grounds. Students had to go through a week's training camp before they could come into Mississippi, and we had psychiatrists there who found a few people and said "We do not want you in Mississippi. We", you know, "We thank you for coming. We appreciate your effort." So it's…by the time they got here that particular summer, they knew they were coming to struggle. What I don't know is whether they really could believe what we said about the violence. We told them that

some of them would die. We certainly thought the leadership was likely to be killed, but we knew that some of the students would be killed, too. So we were very open about that, but I don't think anybody could believe it anymore than you can believe it in this room right now that Americans could sit down and say, "We want you to come down and help these students with remedial algebra, and you might be killed." There's just no rational world to put that in, and those of us in leadership positions really went through a kind of internal hell of can we do this. Is there anyway that we can communicate the truth of what these people are coming in to? We finally decided that all we can do is say it. And if anything happens to them, we are with them and they are with us. We're not using them in place of ourselves. But I…but I don't think a lot of them, the first week, did not know. The second week, after the lynching the first week, we…half the invaders were still at a training grounds in Ohio at an Ohio college when the lynching occurred the first week. A higher percentage of those people decided not to come, but they had an option. Something had happened that was real. We had had college students, black college students, killed in Mississippi that Spring before we brought the outsiders in. Yes.

JEAN: Where did they stay?

KING: Ok, that's very good. They stayed in the black community, except for a few who stayed in the white community. We had people from the University of Tennessee, from Tulane and [inaudible], from the University of Texas, from Emory, from North Carolina, and a large group from the University of Virginia and some of these Whites were housed in the white community here in Jackson. Most of the people were housed in the black community and of course this you know, this had never been done in Mississippi. So here were white people, women, staying in black homes. What this meant to the black community, though, was really something wonderful. The poorest person around who could fix a meal for the Freedom Riders…they still called them Freedom Riders, although it was several years later…if all you could do was fix a meal and share your poverty, it gave you a sense of pride. And for the first time, there were poor Blacks who let a white person have a room in their house. They had never seen that Whites needed anything or that they had anything to give. And it gave a real…this is a consciousness kind of raising or the people's attitudes about themselves changed. I talked a lot about the attitude of the students shifting from liberal to radical, but the greatest change in attitude was within the black community of people who said, "We can stand up and fight. We don't have to have a thousand people come down in Summer of '65 or '66. We have enough internal strength now to do it and try and stand up to any hell that comes." But people living together helped bring about that kind of miraculous change in mindset.

??? You talked about the white moderates and liberals being totally silenced.

But even housing a freedom worker would be, to some extent, dangerous to the Whites who did it.

KING: Right.

??? What was the…if there were white moderates here…how were they reacting by the time it came about in 1964. Where they covertly supporting it or…

KING: No, most of them…

??? …being neutral.

KING: Most of them were saying, "Let things get quiet, so we can work on bringing about the change." They said this in absolute sincerity, because they felt that they could not take any steps with other Whites as long as these other Whites felt threatened by outsiders. That was true, but what the Movement had said is that the white moderates had had their chance earlier and failed. So, once the Movement ups the game bringing in a thousand outsiders, how can a white moderate talk to a white conservative when the conservative feels that I'm being attacked almost as much as [Sherman]. We consciously said by that point, nothing that the white moderates do matters anymore. It's too late. So we'll go ahead and escalate things the opposite direction. It didn't mean that, come first of September after the summer was over, there was no place. There was more place than ever for the white moderates then and many of them worked. And the first thing they had to fight for was to keep the public schools open. But Whites were able to fight. After the summer, white moderates were able to function in moderate ways. Before the summer, a moderate who did anything would risk, not just losing his or her own job, but risk discrediting his or her family and everything you were related to. Wherever you worked, if they didn't fire you, they would be guilty. So you were not free of anything. I mean, Whites, in many instances, were not as free as Blacks. Anyway they turned, there was a network of relationships of other people who would suffer if you did anything. And the Movement, in a sense, freed Whites from that kind of [inaudible].

END OF RECORDING